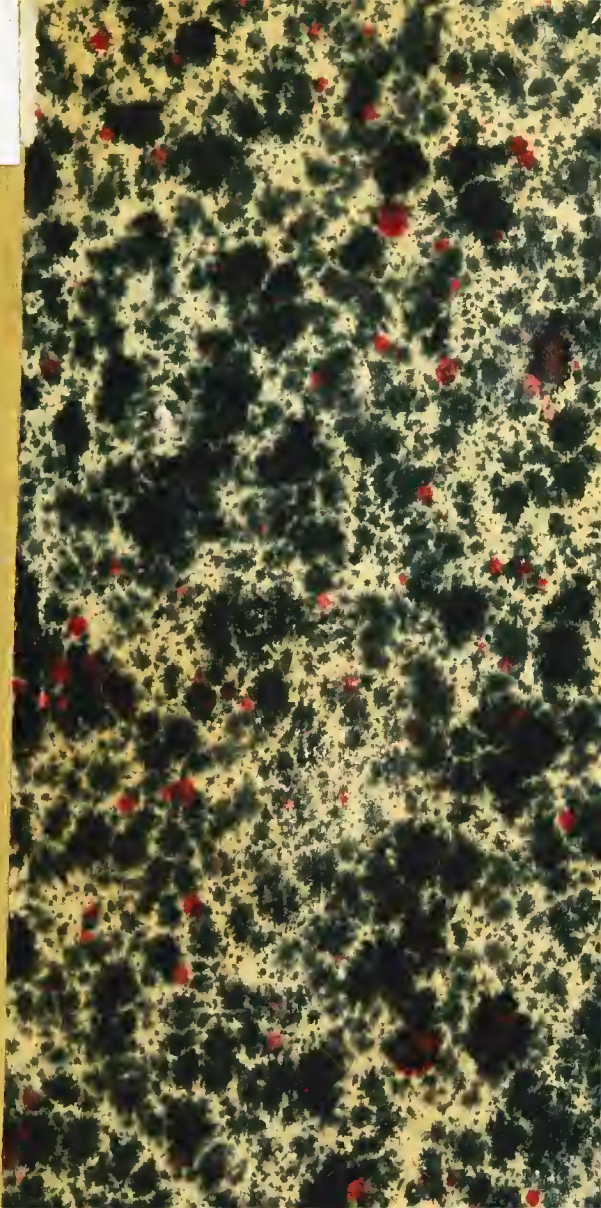


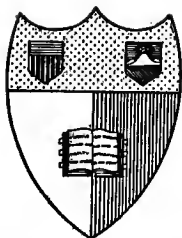
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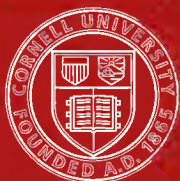
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NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL  
RIGHT AND WRONG





# NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RIGHT AND WRONG:

Two Essays

BY

HENRY SIDGWICK

AUTHOR OF

"THE METHODS OF ETHICS," "ELEMENTS OF POLITICS," "THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN POLITY," ETC.

WITH A PREFACE BY

THE RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT BRYCE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE," "THE AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH," ETC.



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## PREFACE

AMONG the great and startling events of this war there are none of more permanent significance to the historian and the philosophic thinker than those which have raised the question: "By what, if any, moral law are states and their governments bound?" We had been wont to assume that ethical standards and principles exist for states as for individuals, even if the standards were not wholly identical. But four years ago, while the governments of two great civilised nations were, with some faint excuses, violating the traditional standards by their acts, their philosophers and historians were proclaiming that no such standards exist. The State, they declared, has no morality. It is a Law unto

Itself. It can do no wrong. It finds in its supreme end of self-preservation the justification for any means it may employ. The bold assertion of this doctrine forced us to examine the foundations of our old-fashioned beliefs. We had to ask, "Why have we held that there are relations of honour and duty among states? What is Public Morality? Is there such a thing at all, and if it does not exist for the great organisation we call the State, why should it exist for organisations within the state, and how can it exist for individual men if it does not hold good for men associated in a political body?"

When we examine these questions, either by the light of theory or by the conduct of statesmen, rulers, and leaders, in the past and the maxims they have bequeathed to us, the questions turn out to be less simple than most of us have been disposed to believe. The conventional phrases do not satisfy us. We need

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the help of some penetrating and fertile mind, equally at home in philosophy and history—a mind which can combine subtlety of discrimination with clear common sense, to guide us to some solution of our perplexities which may be at once logical and practical.

Such a mind was that of Henry Sidgwick. Within the rapidly diminishing number of those who knew him intimately—and to know him was to admire him—there can be no one who has not, often and often during the last four years been wishing that he were still among us that we might go to him for light and guidance. It has occurred to some of these friends that in a little book which contains several of his shorter pieces there are two essays, dealing with just such moral issues as this war has raised, which deserve to be now reprinted. Neither of them is long, but both contain much matter which is fitted to stimulate reflection. Whoever wishes to cultivate a

habit of exact and patient thinking and to learn how much more intricate many questions are than they appear at first sight to be, and how many qualifications are needed to bring popular opinion into a just conformity with the realities of the case, may always be advised to recur to some of Sidgwick's writings. These essays have the characteristic merits of his method and temper. They are excellent specimens of the refinement and precision and untiring love of truth which he brought to everything he undertook. One of the essays, composed in 1897, is entitled "Public Morality." It deals with the very questions raised by the German invasion of Belgium and by Dr. von Bethmann Hollweg's attempted palliation of that lawless act. Sidgwick had already perceived more than twenty years ago that the current of German thought, beginning to run in an anti-moral direction, was returning to the doctrines promulgated by Machiavelli but provided with



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a new basis by the Hegelian doctrine of the omnipotent state. Some of us had latterly observed that not in Germany only was there a decline from the moral standards of eighty years ago, but no one (so far as I know) has explained with so much ingenuity the causes that have contributed to this change.

The other essay here reprinted and entitled "The Morality of Strife" has also a direct bearing on the phenomena which have marked the conduct of this war, and on those which many fear as likely to arise when the claims of the wage-earning class come into conflict with those of employers and capitalists. Writing in 1890, Sidgwick foresaw what was to be said for and against the scheme of a League of Nations to preserve peace, how far the method of arbitration is and how far it is not applicable to controversies between states, what difficulties surround the determination of

wages by the compulsory action of courts set up, as is now the case in New Zealand and Australia. He pointed out in words that ought to be pondered to-day what may be hoped for from the sedulous cultivation of what he calls the spiritual methods of avoiding both international and industrial strife. Almost the only one of the dangers to mankind which we have seen during these last years which he had assumed (and which all of us had assumed) to have been left behind for ever, was a recrudescence of cruelty in the methods of conducting war, and especially in the brutal treatment of non-combatants and prisoners.

Along with his inexhaustible ingenuity of suggestion, these essays have that atmosphere of mellow wisdom which gives its distinctive quality to all that Sidgwick wrote on ethical and historical subjects. They make those who learnt from him in his lifetime as friends or pupils feel, no less than they did when he

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departed from among us eighteen years ago, that he was one of the irreplaceable lights of his time.

HINDLEAP, FOREST ROW, SUSSEX.

*December, 1918.*



## I.

### PUBLIC MORALITY\*

**T**H**ERE** are two distinct ways of treating ethical questions, the difference between which, in respect of method, is fundamental; though it does not necessarily lead to controversy or diversity of systems. We may begin by establishing fundamental principles of abstract or ideal morality, and then proceed to work out deductively the particular rules of duty or practical conceptions of human good or well-being, through the adoption of which these principles may be as far as possible realized, under the actual conditions of human life. Or, we may contemplate morality as a social fact—"positive morality" as it has been called—*i.e.*, the body of opinions and sentiments as to right and wrong, good and evil, which we find actually prevalent in the society of which we are members; and endeavour, by reflective analysis, removing vagueness and

\* An essay read on Jan. 26, 1897, at a meeting of a Cambridge essay-club called "The Eranus."

ambiguity, solving apparent contradictions, correcting lapses and supplying omissions, to reduce this body of current opinions, so far as possible, to a rational and coherent system. The two methods are in no way antagonistic: indeed, it may reasonably be contended that if pursued with complete success, they must lead to the same goal—a perfectly satisfactory and practical ideal of conduct. But in the actual condition of our intellectual and social development, the respective results of the two methods are apt to exhibit a certain divergence which, for practical purposes, we have to obliterate—more or less consciously—by a rough compromise.

In the present discourse, I shall adopt primarily the second method. I shall accordingly mean by “public morality” prevalent opinions as to right and wrong in public conduct; that is, primarily in the conduct of governments—whether in relation to the members of the states governed, or in dealings with other states. We must, however, extend the notion, especially in states under popular government, to include opinions as to the conduct of private individuals and associations, so far as they influence or control government; or we might put it otherwise, by saying that in such states every man who possesses the franchise has a share in the functions and responsibilities of government. Thus, in such

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states the morality of party strife is a department of public morality. The limits of my discourse will compel me to concentrate attention mainly on government in the ordinary sense — the persons primarily responsible for governmental action, and to whose conduct the judgment of right and wrong applies in the first instance. But it seemed desirable to notice at the outset the wider extension of governmental responsibilities that belongs to democracy; because on this largely depends, in my view, not the theoretical interest, but the practical urgency of the question that I am about to raise.

For the most important inquiry which my subject at the present time suggests is whether there is any deep and fundamental distinction between public and private morality; any more difference, that is, than between the moralities belonging respectively to different professions and callings. We all, of course, recognize that in a certain sense the application of moral rules varies for different professions: certain kinds of duty become specially important for each profession, and accordingly come to be defined for it with special precision; and certain minor problems of conduct are presented to members of one profession which are not presented to another. In this way some variations are thus caused in the practical casuistry

belonging to different callings; so that we might speak of clerical morality, legal morality, and medical morality; but in so speaking we should be commonly understood to refer to variations in detail of comparatively minor importance. It would be a violent paradox to maintain that the ordinary rules of veracity, justice, good faith, etc., were suspended wholly or partially in the case of any of these professions. But the case is different with the department of morality which deals with the conduct of states or governments. In this region paradoxes of the kind just mentioned have been deliberately maintained by so many grave persons that we can hardly refuse them serious attention. Indeed, if anyone will study the remarkable catena of authorities quoted by Lord Acton in his introduction to Burd's edition of Machiavelli's *Prince*, he will, I think, be left in some doubt how far the proposition, that statesmen are not subject in their public conduct even to the most fundamental rules of private morality, can properly be called paradoxical any longer, for persons duly instructed in modern history, and modern political thought. It is still, no doubt, a paradox to the vulgar. It is not a proposition that a candidate for Parliament would affirm on a public platform; but the extent to which it is adopted, explicitly



or implicitly, by educated persons is already sufficient to introduce into popular morality an element of perplexity and disturbance, which it would be desirable, if possible, to remove; and this perplexity and disturbance must be expected to increase, in proportion as democracy increases the responsibility—and the sense of responsibility—of the ordinary citizen.

Observe that in speaking of "morality" I have in view the standard by which men are *judged*, not the standard of their practice. It is not merely that the statesman frequently violates the rules of duty, for that we all do. Nor is it merely that, in view of the greatness of his temptations or the nobleness of his patriotic motives, more indulgence is shown to his breaches of justice, veracity, or good faith, than would be shown to similar transgressions in private life; that the historian is "a little blind" to the faults of a man who has rendered valuable services to his country. For this kind of indulgence is also sometimes shown to persons in other vocations, when subject to special temptations or moved by fine impulses; but it does not commonly amount to a modification of the rule by which men are judged, but only to an alteration in the weight of the censure attached to a breach of the rule. Thus public opinion is indulgent to the amorous

escapades of gallant soldiers and sailors, though it would condemn similar conduct severely in schoolmasters; but no one would gravely argue that the Seventh Commandment is not binding on military men. So again, we all sympathize with the Jacobite servant who "would rather trust his soul in God's hands than his master in the hands of the Whigs," and therefore committed perjury to avoid the worse alternative; but our sympathy does not lead us to contend that domestic loyalty has a licence to swear falsely on suitable occasions.

Nor, further, is the fact I am considering merely that there is, or has been, an esoteric professional morality current among politicians, in which considerable relaxations are allowed of the ordinary rules of veracity, justice, and good faith. This is doubtless a part of the fact; but if this were all, it would be easy to find analogies for it in several other professions and callings, which are all liable to similar esoteric relaxations of ordinary morality. For instance, I suppose that there is now an esoteric morality widely spread among retail traders which allows of secret payments to cooks and butlers in order to secure their custom; but we do not hear the bribery approved or defended outside the circles of retail tradesmen and domestic servants. So, again, it would seem that in certain

ages and countries the current morality among priests has regarded "pious fraud" as legitimate; but the success of this method of promoting the cause of religion would seem to depend upon its being kept strictly esoteric; and I am not aware that it was ever openly defended in works published for the edification of the laity. The peculiarity of the divergence of political from ordinary morality is that it has been repeatedly thus defended, not only by the statesmen themselves, but by literary persons contemplating the statesman's work in the disengaged attitude of students of life and society.

Nor, finally, is it merely that the statesman's breaches of morality, if successful, are liable to be approved by the popular sentiment of the nation which profits by them, so that the writers of this nation are inadvertently led into fallacies and sophistries in order to justify the immoralities in question. This doubtless occurs, and cannot much surprise us. Adam Smith has explained how conscience—the imaginary impartial spectator within the breast of each of us—"requires often to be awakened and put in mind of his duty by the presence of the real spectator"; and how, when the real spectator at hand is interested and partial, while the impartial ones are at a distance, the

propriety of moral sentiments is apt to be corrupted. No doubt this partly explains the low state of international morality, and of the morality of party warfare, as compared with ordinary private morality; but this explanation will not suffice to account for the divergence that I am now considering. It is not merely that particular cases in which leading statesmen have employed immoral means for patriotic ends are sophistically defended by patriotic contemporaries belonging to the same nation. The point is that the approval of such breaches is formulated in explicit general maxims, raised into a system, and deliberately applied by eminent students of history and political science to the acts of statesmen in remote ages and countries. This seems to be especially the case in Germany, where men of letters have in recent times taken the lead in advocating the emancipation of the statesman from the restraints of ordinary morality. It is not merely that the German defends his Frederic or his Bismarck to the best of his ability; his historical and philosophical soul is not content with that. To do him justice, he is equally earnest in defending the repudiation by Rome of the treaty with the Samnites after the incident of the Caudine Forks,—or any similar act of bad faith or aggression perpetrated by that remarkably successful commonwealth.

Let us contemplate more closely the principles of this charter of liberation from the ordinary rules of morality, issued to statesmen and states by respectable thinkers of our century. And, first, I may begin by distinguishing the explicitly anti-moral propositions that I have in view from other propositions in some measure cognate, which yet do not definitely imply them. For instance, when a writer speaks of the "irresistible logic of facts," or tells us that history furnishes the only touchstone for political ideals, that great designs and great enterprises can only prove themselves such by succeeding, that achievement is the only criterion of the true statesman, etc., etc.—this does not necessarily imply the emancipation of the statesman from ordinary moral restraints. It may merely mean that the construction of the finest possible Utopia is not statesmanship, and that the true statesman's ideas must be adapted for realization with the means at his disposal and under given conditions; it need not be taken to deny that the restraints of common morality are among these conditions. No doubt this kind of language strongly *suggests* the

*Si possis rectè si non quocunque modo*

of Horace; but though it suggests this meaning, it does not strictly justify us in attributing it to

the writer. For one might similarly say that the possession of the art of medicine can only be proved by success, and that the one business of the physician is to cure his patient, without intending to imply that it does not matter what commandments the physician may break, provided only the cure is effected.

So, again, when it is said that morality varies from age to age, and from country to country, that the code shifts with the longitude and alters with the development of society, and that in judging any statesman we must apply the standard of his age and country,—all this seems directed rather to the emancipation of the historian from moral narrowness in his judgments than to the emancipation of the statesman from moral restraint in his conduct. For this language assumes that the statesman *is* bound by the established moral code of his society; it only points out that that court for the award of praise and blame, in which the historian from time to time appoints himself to sit as judge and jury, is subject to the difficulties arising from the diversity and conflict of laws; and that the judicious historian must take care to select and apply the right code. Whether this view is sound or not, it has no logical connection with the doctrine that sets a statesman free from the funda-

mental rules of morality, recognized as binding in his own age and country.

One more distinction, and then I come to the point. I suppose that if there is any one historic name with which this anti-moral doctrine is to be specially connected, it is the name of Machiavelli; I might indeed have referred to it briefly as "Machiavellianism," only that I am anxious to examine it rather in its nineteenth century than its sixteenth century form. Now, competent historians of thought have regarded it as the essential principle of Machiavelli that "the end justifies the means"; and certainly this principle is expressly laid down by the great Florentine, not only in the paradoxical and variously interpreted *Prince*, but in the more moderate and straightforward *Discourses on Livy*,—which have largely escaped the reprobation piled on the more famous treatise. He lays this principle down in treating of a case so remote from modern interest as the slaying of Remus by Romulus; he admits that this fratricide was objectionable in itself, but holds it justified when we take Romulus' ends into account. "A good result excuses any violence." And probably for ordinary readers this statement sufficiently characterizes Machiavelli's doctrine as anti-moral; but it must be obvious that it cannot so characterize it

for those who, like myself, hold that the only true basis for morality is a utilitarian basis. I desire here to digress as little as may be into this controversy of the schools: but I must refer to it to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. For in the view of utilitarians the proposition that "the end justifies the means" cannot possibly be taken to characterize the anti-moral position of Machiavelli or his nineteenth century followers. In our view the end must always ultimately justify the means—there is no other way in which the use of any means whatever could possibly be justified. Only it must be a *universal end*; not the preservation of any particular state, still less its aggrandisement or the maintenance of its existing form of government; but the happiness or well-being of humanity at large—or, rather, of the whole universe of living things, so far as any practical issue can be raised between these two conceptions of the universal end. According to us, then, the immorality of Machiavellianism does not lie in its affirmation that the bindingness of all moral rules is relative, or that the moral value of actions is to be estimated by their consequences—if only a sufficiently wide view is taken of these consequences. It only begins when the end in view and the regard for consequences is narrowed and restricted; when



the interest of a particular state is taken as the ultimate and paramount end, justifying the employment of any means whatever to attain it, whatever the consequences of such action may be to the rest of the human race.

And this "national egoism" is, I think, the essence of the Neo-Machiavellianism, which,—though views somewhat similar have frequently found expression from the sixteenth century onward,—has been especially prominent in the political thought of the last forty years, and, as I have said, has found the most unreserved and meditated expression in the writings of Germans. I may give as an example the statements of an able and moderate writer, who is by no means an admirer of Machiavelli. "The state," says Rümelin,\* "is self-sufficient." "Self-regard is its appointed duty; the maintenance and development of its own power and well-being,—egoism, if you like to call this egoism,—is the supreme principle of all politics." "The state can only have regard to the interest of any other state so far as this can be identified with its own interest." "Self-devotion is the principle for the individual,

\* These sentences are taken from an address, "Ueber das Verhältniss der Politik zur Morale," published in 1875, among the *Reden und Aufsätze* of Gustro Rümelin, Chancellor of the University of Tübingen.

self-assertion for the state." "The maintenance of the state justifies every sacrifice, and is superior to every moral rule."

It may perhaps be said that this adoption of national interest as a paramount end does not necessarily involve a collision with established morality: that it may be held along with a belief that veracity, good faith, and justice are always the best policy for states and for individuals. But the common sense of Christendom does not affirm this of individuals, if mundane consequences alone are taken into account: and though Bentham and an important section of his earlier followers were prepared to base private morality on pure self-interest empirically ascertained and measured, this doctrine has few defenders now. And the corresponding doctrine as regards national interest is certainly not to be attributed to the German writers to whom I refer: their practical aim in affirming national egoism is almost always expressly to emancipate the public action of statesmen from the restraints of private morality.

The origin of this Neo-Machiavellianism may be traced to various causes. It is partly due to a reaction from the political idealism of the later eighteenth century—a reaction in which moral rules have been thrown overboard along with con-

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stitutional principles; partly to a reaction from the cosmopolitanism of the same period, tending to an exaggerated affirmation of the self-sufficiency and absolute moral independence of the nation-state; partly, perhaps, to a kind of Neo-paganism, striving to make patriotism take the place of Christianity. Partly it seems to be connected with the triumph of the historical method, influenced in its earlier stage by the Hegelian change of Idealism through Optimism into its opposite, summed up in the famous declaration that the Real is Rational; from which it seems an obvious inference that the man who succeeds is always in the right, whatever his path to success, the man who fails always in the wrong. In any case, I think the nineteenth century study of history has tended to enlarge and systematize the demand for the moral emancipation of the statesman. Doubtless from the time of Machiavelli downwards it has been a common view of practical politicians that "good men" are unsuited for political crises, because they will not, as Walpole puts it, "go the necessary lengths." But so long as Traditional and Ideal Legitimacy were carrying on their constitutional struggle with confident conviction on both sides, the required relaxation from moral restraints was commonly limited to crises sincerely believed to be exceptional. "Revolutions

and wars are not made with rose water," said the political idealist; "but when once we have emancipated nations, and established in them free and equal democratic governments, revolutions and wars will be things of the past." "We have to violate rules of right to defend the right," said the party of order, "in the present tempest of revolutionary madness; but, once the madness is over, the powers ordained of God will, of course, conform to the moral order which they are essentially required to maintain." But the convictions of both parties belong to a stage which the movement of nineteenth century thought has now left behind it. The study of history has caused the view to prevail that "the great world" is to

"Spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change";

and, consequently, at every turn of this rotatory movement forward, there would seem likely to be an ever recurrent need for the morally emancipated statesman—the statesman who, when circumstances drive him to cruelty, rapacity, breach of faith, falsehood, will not waver and whine about the "painful necessity"; but, with simple decision, unhampered by scruples, take the course that leads straightest to the next stage of the everlasting progress.

In the extreme form which this doctrine not

unfrequently assumes, and in which I have, for clearness, presented it, it neither invites nor requires a formal refutation; since it neither appeals to the common moral consciousness of mankind, which, indeed, it frankly claims to override, nor to any principles which have ever been accepted by philosophers. For egoism pure and simple, the doctrine that each individual's interest must be for him ultimately paramount to all other considerations, there is, in abstract ethical discussion, much to be said; but I have never seen, nor can I conceive, any ethical reasoning that will provide even a plausible basis for the compound proposition that a man is bound to sacrifice his private interest to that of the group of human beings constituting his state, but that neither he nor they are under any similar obligation to the rest of mankind. And to do them justice, the advocates of this doctrine do not commonly resort to ethical deductions to justify their position. They prefer to appeal to facts; and certainly it is not difficult to find examples of statesmen who have attained their ends by such breaches of current morality as this doctrine defends: but obviously no appeal to facts can settle the question of right without a palpable *petitio principii*.

There is, however, one objection that may be taken to this doctrine on the purely historical

ground on which its advocates usually argue. I do not think that the history of polity and of political ideas gives us any reason for believing that this emancipation from morality, if once admitted, will stop where the Neo-Machiavellians desire it to stop—at national egoism. The moral emancipation allowed to governments for the promotion of the interests of the nation will be used by governments for the maintenance of their power, even against the interests of the nation; the distinction between what may be done to hold power and what may be done to acquire it will come to be recognized as arbitrary; and so by an easy inclined plane we shall pass from the Machiavellianism of the *Discourses on Livy* to the Machiavellianism of the *Prince*. Or, again, granting that some kind of corporate<sup>u</sup> sentiment is maintained, there is still no ground for confidence that it will always attach itself to the particular corporation called the state. If everything is permitted in national struggles for the sake of the nation, it will be easy to think that everything is permitted in party-struggles or class-struggles for the sake of the party or class. The tendencies of modern democracy are running strongly towards the increase of corporate sentiments and the habits of corporate action in industrial groups and classes, and so towards dividing civilized humanity by lines

that cut across the lines separating nations ; and history certainly does not justify us in confidently expecting that when the rules of private morality are no longer held to apply to public action, patriotism will still keep class feeling and party feeling within the bounds required by national peace and well-being. It is in the later period of free Greece—the civilized fourth century—that the class conflict is most disintegrative, which makes, as Plato says, “two cities in one, the city of the rich and the city of the poor”: and similarly in mediæval Italy, whereas in the twelfth century the chronicle ran simply, “Parma fights Piacenza,” before the end of the thirteenth it ran, “Parma, with the exiles from Piacenza, fights Piacenza.”

I conclude, then, that this Neo-Machiavellian doctrine is really condemned by history—the Cæsar to which it appeals—no less than by the old-fashioned moral philosophy that it despises. But I am far from wishing to dismiss it with a bare negation. The extent to which it has found favour with thoughtful persons affords a *prima facie* presumption that there are elements of sound reason in it, which have been exaggerated into dangerous paradox ; and, if so, it seems very desirable to get these clear. The most important of these elements—especially as regards international conduct—is, I

think, more easily discernible in the work of Hobbes than in that of Machiavelli; the Englishman being a more systematic and philosophical thinker than his Florentine master, though a less acute and penetrating analyst of political experience. Hobbes, as is well known, accepted fully the Machiavellian view of human relations—outside the pale of a political society compacted through unquestioning obedience into peace and order. Outside this pale he certainly held any aggression or breach of compact conducive to self-preservation to be lawful to the human individual or group, struggling to maintain its existence in the anarchy called a state of nature; but he justified this licence on the ground that a member of such a “natural society” who may observe moral rules can have no reasonable expectation of reciprocal observance on the part of others, and must therefore merely “make himself a prey to others.” In Hobbes’ view, morality—the sum of the conditions of harmonious human living in society—is a system that man is always bound to keep before his mind as an ideal; but his obligation to realize it in act is conditional on a reasonable expectation of reciprocity. This condition is, I think, with careful limitations and qualifications, sound; and the error of Hobbes does not lie so much in making this demand for



reciprocity—though he makes it too unguardedly—as in his palpable exaggeration of the difference between human relations in a so-called “natural” society and in the state of political order. The exaggeration is palpable—since (*e.g.*) the mere fact that the habit of making compacts prevails among states is evidence of a prevalent confidence that they will be more or less observed—but the exaggeration should not blind us to the real divergence that exists between the rules of public and of private duty, or to its connection with the cause that Hobbes assigns for it.

This divergence, observe, does not arise in the main from any fundamental difference in the general principles of ideal morality for states and individuals respectively, but from the actual difference of their relations. A similar, if not an equal, divergence would exist for a virtuous individual who found himself in a society where, whether from anarchy or from other causes, the moral standard maintained in ordinary conduct was as low as the moral standard of international conduct actually is.

As Mr. Spencer\* forcibly says—

“Ideal conduct . . . is not possible for the ideal man in the midst of men otherwise constituted. An

\* *Principles of Ethics*, Part I., chap. xv., p. 280.

absolutely just or perfectly sympathetic person, could not live and act according to his nature in a tribe of cannibals. Among people who are treacherous and utterly without scruple, entire truthfulness and openness must bring ruin. If all around recognize only the law of the strongest, one whose nature will not allow him to inflict pain on others, must go to the wall. There requires a certain congruity between the conduct of each member of a society and other's conduct. A mode of action entirely alien to the prevailing modes of action, cannot be successfully persisted in—must eventuate in death of self, or posterity, or both."

I do not mean that the customary conduct of nations to each other is accurately represented by Spencer's description; but it is liable to resemble this description much more closely than the customary conduct of individuals in a civilized society. Nor, again, do I mean that a state, any more than an individual, can justify conduct which ideal morality condemns by simply alleging the similar conduct of other states—even the majority of other states: if this were so, moral progress would be almost impossible in international relations. From the fact that unprovoked aggression, committed with impunity and successful in its immediate aims, is a phenomenon that continually recurs throughout modern European history, I do not infer that it is right for a modern European state to

commit an act of unprovoked aggression; what I contend is that this fact materially alters the moral relations between states by extending the rights and duties of self-protection.

The difference thus introduced is unmistakably, though vaguely, recognized in ordinary moral thought; all we have to do—according to the plan of the present essay—is to bring it clearly before our minds, and assign its limits as precisely as we can. Thus it has long been tacitly recognized that in international relations the conditions are wanting under which the morality of passive submission and resignation, specially distinctive of Christianity, is conducive to the general well-being. It has been comprehended by the common sense of the Christian world that the precept to turn the other cheek, and repay coercion and encroachment with spontaneous further concessions, was not given to nations; and that the meek who are to inherit the earth must be understood to be meek individuals, protected by a vigorous government from the disastrous consequences to themselves that meekness in a state of anarchy would entail.

The case is different with the rules of veracity, good faith, abstinence from aggression on person or property, which are not specially Christian; it would

be absurd to interpret popular morality as allowing governments a general licence to dispense themselves from the obligation of these rules when they find it convenient, in view of the general tendency to transgress them. But to an important extent, in special cases, such a licence is commonly conceded. Take the case of veracity. We should not condemn a general in war for disseminating false statements to mislead the enemy, or for sending spies to obtain information as to the enemy's movements by processes involving an indefinite amount of falsehood. A similar licence is commonly conceded to governments—or at least to their subordinates—in performing the task of maintaining order within the community governed. We recognize that in the ceaseless contest with secret crime, the business of the detective police—which involves continual deception—is practically indispensable; and must therefore be regarded as a legitimate, if not highly honourable, calling. There is at present no such general toleration of the use of falsehood and spies and stratagems in diplomacy; times are changed, I am told, since the definition of a diplomatist as a person “sent to lie abroad for the benefit of his country,” was from a scientific point of view admissible. But here again, I think, a reasonable expectation of reciprocity is practically accepted as a condition of the stringency of the rule prohibit-

ing such artifices—a plot would be held to justify a counterplot, at any rate if there were no other effective means of defeating it.

In the case of breach of engagements, the extension of the scope of self-protection is of a somewhat different character. Our common morality does not justify treacherous promises, made without intention of fulfilling them, even in dealing with states that have been guilty of such treachery. Speaking broadly, the right mode of dealing with such a state is clearly to treat its promises as idle words, unless there is some adequate ground, other than the promise itself, for expecting its fulfilment. But when modern states have failed to carry out their compacts—and history abounds in instances of such failure—they have usually made excuses, alleging ambiguity of terms, material change of circumstances, or the non-fulfilment of promises on the other side. Now, in dealing with a government which—in order to free itself from inconvenient treaty-obligations—is in the habit of using pleas of this kind in a strained and unreasonable manner, I conceive that any other government would not be liable to censure for claiming a similar freedom—at any rate, in case of urgent need.

It will be observed that, according to the moral view that I am endeavouring to express, urgent

need is held to be required—as well as the antecedence of similar acts on the other side—in order completely to justify a breach of veracity or good faith. Without urgent need, the fact that any particular act of unverity or bad faith is merely imitative and retaliatory affords an excuse, but not an adequate justification; since even a retaliatory act of this kind has the mischievous effect of a bad precedent, and tends to depress the customary standard of morality between nations.

I may here mention one special difference between public and private morality arising from the same absence of a common government which has hitherto rendered wars between nations inevitable,—the different view that is and must be taken of the bindingness of compacts imposed by force in the two cases. In an orderly state, a promise obtained from any person by unlawful force has, of course, no legal validity: and it is at least doubtful whether it has any moral validity. If in England a robber were to force me, under threat of death, to promise him a large sum of money, I conceive that no thoughtful person would censure me for breaking my promise, though he might feel a sentimental preference for the opposite course. But in the case of states, we cannot similarly treat wrongful force as invalidating obligations deliberately undertaken

under its pressure: to do this—as I have elsewhere said—“would obviously tend to aggravate the evils of unjust victory” in war: “as the unjust victor, being unable to rely on the promises of the vanquished community, would be impelled by self-interest to crush it utterly.” At the same time, there is an opposite danger in treating oppressive conditions thus imposed as finally and permanently binding: as this would increase the temptation—already sufficiently strong—to skilfully-timed acts of violent aggression. In this dilemma, international morality has, I think, to adopt a somewhat vague compromise, and to regard such obligations as having a limited validity, but tending to lose their force through lapse of time, and the change of circumstances that lapse of time brings with it.\*

So far I have been speaking of international relations; but the general principles that I have applied to them must, I think, be admitted to some extent in respect of internal crises in the life of a political society. Here, however, I must guard against a misunderstanding. I do not think we should assume that the changes—even the greater changes—in internal polity, which the future has

\* This general view may be made a little less vague by distinguishing different kinds of conditions imposed by unjust force. See my *Elements of Politics*, chap. xvi., p. 268 (2nd Edn.)

doubtless in store for European states, must necessarily involve violent breaches of political order, in respect of which the ordinary rules of morality are to be suspended. Revolutions and *coups d'état* are fraught with such wide and far-reaching mischief that the efforts to avoid them should never be relaxed: if political meteorologists unite in affirming that one or other must come "sooner or later," the true patriot should answer, with Canning, that he "prefers it later." The same is, of course, true of wars: but there is at present more reason to hope for the ultimate success of such efforts in the case of internal strife owing to the greater strength of the bonds of interest and sympathy that unite members of the same state. But if ever such efforts seem doomed to fail, and the minds of men are turning to the violent courses that appear inevitable, an enlargement of the right of self-protection—somewhat similar to that which we have just recognized in international relations—must be conceded to any of the sections into which the state is suffering a transient moral disintegration; or rather to the statesmen acting on behalf of such a section.

The last sentence leads me to notice a reason sometimes given for divergence between public and private morality, which I have not yet con



sidered. It is said that the actions of states have generally to be judged as actions of governments; and that governments hold a position analogous to that of trustees in relation to the community governed, and therefore cannot legitimately incur risks which a high morality would require individuals to incur in similar cases. I think that there is some force in the argument, but that it is only applicable within a very narrow range. Trustees, whether for private or collective interests, are bound to be just; and the cases are at any rate very rare in which the highest morality applicable in the actual condition of international relations would really require states to be generous at the definite sacrifice of their interests. For a state to embark on a career of international knight-errantry would, generally speaking, be hardly more conducive to the interests of the civilized world than to those of the supposed Quixotic community. Still I admit that cases may occur in which intervention of this kind, at a cost or risk to the intervening community beyond what strict self-regard could justify, would be clearly advantageous to the world, and that in such cases the "quasi-trusteeship" attaching to the position of government might render its duty doubtful. It would seem that in a case of this kind the moral responsibility for public

conduct is properly transferred in a large measure from the rulers to the ruled. The government may legitimately judge that it is right to run a risk with the support of public opinion which it would be wrong to run without it; so that it becomes the duty of private persons—in proportion as they contribute to the formation of public opinion—to manifest a readiness to give the required support.

To sum up briefly the main result of a long discussion. So far as the past conduct of any foreign state shows that reciprocal fulfilment of international duty—as commonly recognized—cannot reasonably be expected from it, I admit that any other state that may have to deal with it must be allowed a corresponding extension of the right of self-protection, in the interest of humanity at large no less than in its own interest. It must be allowed to anticipate attack which it has reasonable grounds for regarding as imminent, to meet wiles with wiles as well as force with force, and to be circumspect in the fulfilment of any compact it may make with such a state. But I do not regard this as constituting a fundamental difference between public and private morality; similar rights may have to be exceptionally claimed and exercised between man and man in the most orderly society that we have experience of; the

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difference is mainly in the degree of exceptionality of the claim. It remains true that in both cases equally it must be insisted that the interest of the part is to be pursued only in such manner and degree as is compatible with the interests of the larger community of which it is a part; and that any violation of the rules of mutual behaviour actually established in the common interests of this community, so far as it is merely justified by its conduciveness to the sectional interest of a particular group of human beings, must receive unhesitating and unsparing censure.

## II.

### THE MORALITY OF STRIFE\*

ALL who have thought earnestly on moral questions, and in particular have reflected on the causes of and the remedies for the failure to do what is right in themselves and others, must have recognized that the causes of this failure divide themselves naturally under two distinct heads. Firstly, men do not *see* their duty with sufficient clearness; secondly, they do not *feel* the obligation to do it with sufficient force. But there are great differences of opinion among thoughtful persons as to the relative importance of these different sources of wrong conduct. The commonest opinion is disposed to lay most stress on the latter, the defect of feeling or will, and even to consider the defect of intellectual insight as having comparatively little practical importance. It is not uncommon to hear it said by preachers and moralizers that we all

\* An address delivered to the London Ethical Society in the year 1890.

*know* our duty quite sufficiently for practical purposes, if we could only spur or brace our wills into steady action in accordance with our convictions. And it is no doubt true that, if we suppose all our intellectual errors and limitations to remain unchanged, and only the feebleness of character which prevents our acting on our convictions removed, an immense improvement would take place in many departments of human life. But it is important not to overlook other inevitable results of the supposed change, which would certainly not be improvements. We all recognize the dangers of fanaticism. But what is a fanatic? Surely we all mean by a "fanatic" a person who acts up to his convictions, resolutely and perhaps vehemently, when they are opposed to the common sense of mankind, and when—in the judgment of common sense—his acts are likely to lead to gravely mischievous consequences. If, therefore, we suppose that the element of intellectual error in the causes of wrong action remains unchanged, while the element of feebleness of character, weakness of motive or will to do duty, is entirely removed, we must suppose fanaticism greatly increased. We must also suppose an increase in the bad effects of more widespread errors in popular morality, which are now often prevented from causing the

full evil which they tend to cause, by the actual feebleness of the mistaken resistance which they oppose to healthy natural impulses. Hence, when we had to strike the balance of gain and loss to human happiness resulting from the change—though I have no doubt that the gain on the whole would be great—we must recognize that the drawbacks would be serious and substantial.

Considerations of this kind have led some thoughtful minds to take an exactly opposite view, and to regard it of paramount importance to remove the intellectual source of error in conduct, holding with Socrates that the true good of each individual man is really consistent and harmonious with the true good of all the rest; and that what every man really wants is his own true good, if he only knew it. But this view also is too simple and unqualified; since, in the first place, a man often sacrifices what he rightly regards as his true interest to the overmastering influence of appetite or resentment or ambition; and, secondly, if we measure human well-being by an ordinary mundane standard, and suppose men's feelings and wants unaltered, we must admit that the utmost intellectual enlightenment would not prevent the unrestrained pursuit of private interest from being, sometimes, anti-social, anarchical, and disorganizing. Still, allowing all

this, it seems to me not only that a very substantial gain would result if we could remove from men's minds all errors of judgment as to right and wrong, good and evil, even if we left other causes of bad conduct unchanged; but that the gain in this case would be more unmixed than in the former case. Suppose, for instance, that every one who is liable to drink too much had clearly present to his mind, in the moment of temptation, the full amount of harm that his insobriety was doing to his bodily health, his reputation, his means of providing for those dependent on him; some, no doubt, would drink all the same, but the great majority of those not yet in bondage to the unnatural craving would draw back. Suppose, again, that any one who is wronging a neighbour saw, as clearly as any impartial judge or friend would see, the violation of right that he is committing; surely only a thoroughly bad man would persist in his wrong-doing. And thoroughly bad men are after all rare exceptions among the beings of mingled and chequered moral nature of whom the great mass of mankind consists, and who on the whole mean only to maintain their own rights and not to encroach upon the rights of others; though doubtless, from a mixture of intellectual muddle with passionate impulse or selfish negligence, they are continually liable to wrong others.

I have drawn attention to this fundamental distinction between (1) improvement in moral insight and (2) improvement in feeling and will, because I think it important that we should have a clear view of its general character before we enter on the special discussion of the "Morality of Strife," which is the subject of the present paper. I ought perhaps to explain that in speaking of strife I shall have primarily and chiefly in view that most intense form of conflict which we call war, in which masses of civilized men elaborately try to destroy each other's lives and incidentally to take each other's property. This is the strife which, from its fundamental nature and inevitable incidents, causes the most intense and profound moral aversion and perplexity to the modern mind. At the same time it seems to me that the deepest problems presented by war, and the deepest principles to be applied in dealing with them, are applicable also to the milder conflicts and collisions that arise within the limits of an orderly and peaceful community, and especially to those struggles for wealth and power carried on by classes and parties within a state. Indeed, these latter—though conducted by the milder methods of debate and vote—often resemble wars very strongly in the states of thought and feeling that they arouse, and also in some of the difficulties that they suggest.



Now, in considering the morality of strife, the difference of opinion which I have been discussing, as to the causes of wrong conduct in general, meets us with especial force. Thus many will say, when they hear of moralizing war, that the moralist ought not to acquiesce in its existence; he ought to trace it to its source, in the lack of kindly feeling among human beings. Spread kindness and goodwill; make altruism predominate over egoism; and wars between states will come to an end among civilized men, because there will be no hostile emotions to rouse them; while within states strife will resolve itself into a competition for the privilege of doing good to others. I do not deny that a solution of the problem of war for the world might be found in this diffusion of kindly feeling, if sufficiently ardent and universal. But for this effect the universality is necessary as well as the ardour. The increase of the "enthusiasm of humanity" in a moral minority, in a world where most men are still as selfish as now, would have no decisive tendency to prevent strife; for if around us some are wronging others, the predominance of altruism in ourselves, though it will diminish our disposition to fight in our own quarrels, will make us more eager to take part with others who are wronged; and since, so long as we are human beings, our

kindly feelings must flow more strongly in special channels, as they grow in intensity we shall exhibit greater energy in defending against unjust attacks the narrower communities and groups in which we take special interest. Increase of sympathy among human beings may ultimately do away with strife; but it will only be after a long interval, during which the growth of sympathetic resentment against wrongs seems not unlikely to cause as much strife as the diminution of mere selfishness prevents. The Founder of Christianity is recorded to have said that he "came not to bring peace on earth, but a sword," and the subsequent history of Christianity offers ample and striking confirmation of the truth of the prediction. And the same may be said, with at least equal truth, of that ardour for the secular amelioration of mankind which we find presented to us in these latter days as a substitute for Christian feeling.

The extinction of strife through the extension of amity being thus at best a remote event, we may allow ourselves to dwell for a moment on the brighter aspects of the continuance of war. War is an evil; but it is not, from an ethical point of view, an unmixed evil. Indeed, its value as a school of manly virtue led the greatest thinkers of ancient Greece—even in the civilized fourth century—to

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regard the fighting part of the community as the only part on whose education it was worth while to bestow labour and care; the occupations of the trader and the artisan being considered an insuperable bar to the development of fine moral qualities. Christianity and the growth of free industry combined have carried European thought so far away from the point of view of Plato and Aristotle, that their utterances on this topic now seem to most of us startlingly narrow-minded and barbaric; but the element of truth that they contain still, from time to time, forces itself on the modern mind, and finds transient expression in a modified form. There are, I believe, even at the end of the nineteenth century, some thoughtful persons seriously concerned for moral excellence, who would regret the extinction of war; attracted not so much by the showy virtue of valour in battle, but by the unreserved devotion, the ardour of self-sacrifice for duty and the common good, which war tends to develop. If this acceptance of war as an indispensable school of virtue were widespread enough to impede the drift of modern opinion and sentiment towards universal peace as an ideal, it might be necessary to argue against it as a dangerous paradox. In such an argument we should not lay stress exclusively or even mainly

on its physical mischief; but still more on its moral evils, its barbarous inadequacy as a means of settling disputes of right, the frequent triumphs of injustice and their demoralizing consequences, the constant tendency of the bitter resentments and the intensification of national self-regard, which war brings with it, to overpower the sentiments of humanity, and confuse and obscure those of justice and good faith. But I need not labour these points; the evils of war are so keenly felt that the moralist may without danger allow himself to make the most of the opportunities of moral development that it affords.

What I rather wish now to point out is, that the moral benefits of war, such as they are, depend largely on the fact that war is not usually—as cynics imply—a mere collision of passions and cupidities; it is a conflict in which each side conceives itself to be contending on behalf of legitimate interests. In the wars I have known, as a contemporary, this has been strikingly manifested in the sincere belief of religious persons generally—ordinary plain honest Christians on either side—that God would defend their cause. In the wars of ancient history a people's belief in special divine protection was not equally an evidence of its belief in the justice of its cause, since each

nation had its own deities who were expected to take sides with their worshippers; but in a war between modern Christian nations, worshipping the same God, the favour of heaven implies the justice of the cause favoured; and it is sometimes startling to see that not only is each side convinced of its overwhelming claims to the favour of heaven, but it can hardly believe in a similar sincere conviction on the other side. Perhaps some of my readers may remember how, in the Franco-German war of 1870, the pious utterances of the Emperor William excited the derision of Frenchmen and their friends; it seemed to the latter not only evident that the invading Germans were brigands, but even impossible to conceive that they did not know that they were brigands. This strikingly shows how war among human beings, supposing them to possess the degree of rationality that average civilized humanity has at present reached, is normally not a mere conflict of interests, but also a conflict of opposing views of right and justice.

I must not exaggerate. I do not mean that in modern times unscrupulous statesmen have never made wars that were substantially acts of conscious brigandage, and have never been applauded for so doing by the nations whom they led, who have suffered a temporary obscurity of their moral sense

under the influence of national ambition. I do not say that this has not occurred; but I do not think it is the normal case, and I shall leave it out of account, partly because it does not seem to me to give rise to any moral problem which we can profitably discuss. The immorality of such unscrupulous aggression is simple; and the duty is no less clear for any individual in the aggressing country to use any moral and intellectual influence he may possess—facing unpopularity—to prevent the immoral act. It may be difficult to say exactly how far he should go in such opposition; but the answer to this question depends so much on circumstances that an abstract discussion of it is hardly profitable.

It is still more true that in any strife of parties and classes within a modern civilized state, when there is a conflict of interests, it is not of bare interests, but of interests clothed in the garb of rights—and in the main the garb is not hypocritically worn. In such a state the sentiment of fellow-citizenship, the habit of co-operating for common ends, the community of hopes and fears stirred by the vicissitudes of national prosperity, tend powerfully to reinforce the wider sentiments of humanity and justice to men as men. Hence, though the predatory type of human being cannot be said to

be rare in any civilized society, it is still an exceptional type; the average member of such a society is too moral to enter into a struggle on behalf of interests which he knows to be "sinister interests"—to use Bentham's apt phrase. I do not say that he is not easily led to believe that what is conducive to his interests is just—men's proneness to such belief is proverbial—but the belief is generally sincere; and though, again, in the heat of party conflict many things are done from passion and eagerness to win which are known to be wrong, these are deplorable incidents of party strife, they do not make up its moral texture.

If, then, normal human strife is due not merely to colliding interests, but to conflicting views of rights, it would seem that we might hope to reduce its worst effects to a sporadic and occasional evil, if we could only find and make clear the true definition of the rights in question. For though the interests of all individuals, classes, and nations are not harmonious, their rights are; that is the essential difference between the two. You cannot be sure of bringing disputants into harmony and peace by enlightening them as to their true interests, though you may in some cases; but you must do this if you can really and completely enlighten them as to their true rights, unless they are bad enough

to fight on in conscious wrongful aggression. Such completeness of enlightenment, however, we cannot reasonably expect to attain; the complexity of human relations, and the imperfection of our intellectual methods of dealing with them, preclude the hope that we can ever solve a problem of rights with the demonstrative clearness and certainty with which we can solve a problem of mathematics. The practical question therefore is, how we can attain a tolerable approximation to such a solution.

To many the answer to this question seems simple. They propose to settle the disputes of right between nations, and the disputes of right between classes and sections within any state, by applying what I will call an *external* method; *i.e.*, by referring the dispute to the judgment of impartial—and, if possible, skilled—outsiders, as the legal disputes of individual members of a civilized community are referred to arbitrators, judges, and juries. I call this an external method, because it does not require any effect to be produced on the intellects and consciences of the disputants; they are allowed to remain in their onesided and erroneous convictions; indeed, they are almost inevitably left to concentrate their attention on their own onesided views, and—if I may so say—harden themselves in their onesidedness, because their function in the



process of settlement is to advocate their own case before the outside arbiter; they are not supposed to be convinced by his decision, but merely to accept it for the sake of peace.

The method takes various forms, according to circumstances. In the case of disputes between nations it takes the form of a substitution of arbitration for war; the practical—or, perhaps I may say, the technical—problem comes to be how to get a wise and impartial court of international arbitration. A similar method is widely advocated for the settlement of those disputes between employers and employed—within the limits drawn by the existing law—which have been so long a prominent feature of our present industrial condition. But in the still deeper disputes between classes and sections within a community, which tend to changes in the established legal order, the expedient commonly recommended is somewhat different; it consists in the construction of a legislature on the representative system, so adjusted and balanced that each class and section has enough representatives to advocate its claims, but not enough to constitute it a judge in its own cause; the decision on any proposed change in laws or taxation, affecting the interests of different sections in opposite ways, is always to rest with the presumably impartial repre-

sentatives of other sections. Now, I do not wish to undervalue the external method in any of these cases; I think the attention of statesmen should be seriously directed to making it as perfect as possible. But I cannot believe that it is in any case safe to rely on it for a complete and final removal of the evils of strife.

Let us place ourselves at the point of view of a nation that is being drawn into what it regards as a just war, according to the received principles of international justice. It is obvious that any serious and unprovoked violation of international duty must be held to give a state whose rights are violated a claim for reparation; and if reparation be obstinately refused, it would seem that—so long as states are independent—the offended state must be held to have a right to obtain it by force, with the aid of any other states that can be persuaded to join it. This exercise of force need not necessarily amount to war. For instance, if the property belonging to a state or any of its members has been unjustly seized by another state, reparation may be obtained by reprisals; but it is most probable that such reprisals, being resisted, will lead to the thorough-going appeal to physical force as a means of settlement, which we call war. Well, at this point it is asked, by many earnest

philanthropists, "Why should not the offended state make a proposal to submit its claims to arbitration, and why should not the offending state be made, by the pressure of public opinion, to accept this proposal?" I am far from waiving this suggestion aside as out of the range of practical politics. Much may be hoped, in the way of reduction of the danger of war between civilized states, from improvements in the machinery of arbitration, and a more extensive adoption of the improved machinery; and the efforts of those who keep urging these points on the attention of statesmen and of the public deserve our warmest sympathy. But I think that such efforts are more likely to attain the limited success which can alone be reasonably hoped, if those who urge them bear in mind the inevitable limitations of the applicability of arbitration to the disputes of right between nations.

In the first place, the violation of right which leads to a conflict, may be a continuing evil, which requires immediate abatement as well as reparation; and the violence required for this abatement is likely to lead to further violence on the other side, so that the conflicting states may be drawn into the condition of war by a series of steps too rapid to allow of the delay necessary for arbitration, and which involve so many fresh grounds of complaint

that the decision of the original dispute may easily sink into insignificance. But there are other reasons of more importance and wider application. On the one hand, the interests at stake may be so serious that a state, believing itself able to obtain redress by its own strong hand, cannot reasonably be expected to run the risk of arbitration, unless it can feel tolerably secure of impartiality in the arbitrator; or, to keep closer to the moral problem actually presented, I should rather say that the government of a community cannot feel justified in thus risking the interests of the community intrusted to it. On the other hand, where the quarrel is one that involves a conflict of principles, widely extended among civilized states, there may be an insuperable difficulty in finding an arbiter on whose impartiality both sides could rely. A similar difficulty may be caused by the ties of interest and alliance binding nations into groups. Thus, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it would have been almost impossible to find such an arbiter in Europe in any quarrel between a Catholic and a Protestant state. In the nineteenth century it would be almost impossible to find such an arbiter in any quarrel caused by the claims of a nationality struggling for independence; while in the intervening period the combinations of states—formed, to a great

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extent, for the legitimate end of maintaining the "balance of power"—presented a similar obstacle.

Now, I think that history shows that minor violations of international rights—such as arbitration undoubtedly might settle—have rarely been the real *causes*, though they have often been the ostensible causes and the real *occasions*, of momentous wars. The most serious wars of the European group of states have resulted from conflicting fundamental principles, religious or political, or conflicting national interests of great real or supposed importance, or more often a combination of the two. Hence, though the international law which arbitrators can administer may be most useful in removing minor occasions of controversy and in minimizing the mischief resulting from graver conflicts, we can hardly look to it to provide such a settlement for the graver controversies as will enable us to dispense with war. This will perhaps appear more clearly if we reflect for a moment on the special difficulties that beset the definition of international rights, in consequence of which opposite views of imperfectly-defined rights tend to be combined with discordant interests. Such difficulties arise partly from the absence of a central government of the community of nations; partly from the imperfect unity and cohesion of a nation

as compared with individual human beings; partly from the great difference in degrees of civilization in the society of nations; and practically we have also to take into account the comparatively small number of civilized states, and the consequent greater importance of an individual nation—and still more of a group of allied nations—relatively to the whole community whose affairs international law is designed to regulate. The first of these causes renders necessary and legitimate an extension of the right and duty of self-defence, which it is very difficult to limit. War is not only obviously just against actual aggression, but when aggression is unmistakably being prepared, the nation threatened cannot be condemned for striking the first blow if this is an important gain for self-defence. But this easily passes over into anticipation of a blow that is merely feared, *not* really threatened. Indeed, this enlarged right of self-protection against mere danger has often been further extended to justify hostile interference to prevent a neighbour growing strong merely through expansion or coalescence with other states. I think that moral opinion should set itself steadily against this latter extension of the right of self-protection; still, it is obviously difficult to define exactly the degree of alarm that would justify hostile action. It is still more difficult to

decide, on any clearly just principles, how far the right of national self-preservation may be legitimately extended into the right to prevent interference with "national development"—*e.g.*, if nation A appropriates territory over which nation B is hoping to extend its sway some time or other. At the same time, this is a cause of strife that we must, I think, expect to operate more intensely as the world gets fuller. With each successive generation the demand for expansion on the part of civilized nations is likely to grow stronger; and the more serious the interests involved, the more difficult it will be to obtain acquiescence in the rules determining the legitimate occupation of new territory, which must inevitably be to some extent arbitrary. And the question is complicated by the differences in grade of civilization, to which I have referred; for the nations most advanced in civilization have a tendency—the legitimacy of which cannot be broadly and entirely disputed—to absorb semi-civilized states in their neighbourhood, as in the expansion of England and Russia in Asia, and of France in Africa. As, I say, the tendency cannot be altogether condemned, since it often seems clearly a gain to the world on the whole that the absorption should take place; still it is obviously difficult to define the conditions under which this is legiti-

mate, and the civilized nation engaged in this process of absorption cannot be surprised that other civilized nations think that they have a right to interfere and prevent the aggression.

When we turn to the part of the earth tolerably filled with civilized nations—to Western Europe—it seems that the duty of avoiding substantial encroachment would be so clear that it could not be violated without manifest immorality, if only such nations had perfect internal unity and coherence. I do not see, *e.g.*, how any quarrel could easily arise between France and Spain—apart from collisions of interest in other parts of the world—except of the minor kind which arbitration might settle, unless there was something like avowed brigandage on one side or the other. But we have only to look at Germany and Italy to see that even Western Europe is far from being composed of states of this type; and even if internal unity were attained for a time, it might always be broken up again by some new division.

I therefore think it inevitable that, at least for a long time to come, every nation in the most important matters—as individuals in matters not within the range of law courts—must to an important extent be judge in its own cause; it may refer some of its disputes to arbitration—and I



hope the number may increase—but there are others which it cannot so refer, and its judgment must determine the limits of such reference. Other considerations might be adduced, tending to restrict still further the normal application of arbitration in international controversies; *e.g.*, it might be shown that even where both sides in such a controversy are animated by an adequate and preponderant desire for peace, an acceptable compromise is often more likely to be attained by direct negotiation than by reference to an arbitrator. But it belongs to a political rather than an ethical discussion to dwell on points like these. I have said enough to show why even civilized nations, in which the majority are so far moral as to be sincerely unwilling to fight for a cause clearly known to be wrong, cannot be expected to avoid war by arbitration, except to a very limited extent.

If, then, a moral acquiescence in war is at present inevitable, what is to be the aim of morality with regard to it? Chiefly, it would seem, twofold: to reduce its causes by cultivating a spirit of justice, and to minimize its mischievous effects by the prevalence of a spirit of humanity. Now in this latter point the progress of modern civilization shows a steady and considerable improvement,—though it must be admitted that the progress starts

from a very low level. The growth of humane sentiment has established rule after rule of military practice, tending to limit the mischief of war to the *minimum* necessary for the attainment of its ends. Thus *bond-fide* non-combatants have been more and more completely exempted from personal injury, while as regards their property, the old indiscriminate pillage has given place to regulated requisitions and contributions, the severity of which at any rate falls short of cruelty. In the case of combatants, the use of instruments—such as explosive bullets—which tend to cause pain out of proportion to disablement has been expressly prohibited, and the old liberty of refusing quarter practically abandoned; while elaborate provision has been made for humane tending of sick and wounded soldiers; and humane treatment of prisoners, even at considerable inconvenience to their captors, is decisively imposed by the opinion of the civilized world. Much, no doubt, might yet be done in the same direction; but considering the aims of war, and the deadly violence inevitable in its methods, I think that civilized humanity, at the end of the nineteenth century, may look with some complacency on the solid amount of improvement achieved.

The case is different when we turn to the other duty of cultivating a spirit of justice. We

all admit that—as we must be judges in our own cause—we ought to endeavour to be just judges; but there is hardly any plain duty of great importance in which civilized men fail so palpably as in this. Doubtless the impartiality required is difficult; still, I am persuaded that even the imperfect beings who compose modern nations might perform with more success the judicial function—which, in a modern state under popular government, has become, in some degree, the business of every man—if national consciences could be roused to feel the nobility, and grapple practically and persistently with the difficulties of the task. At any rate, the thoughtful and moral part of every community might fit themselves for this judicial function with more care, and perform it under a sense of graver responsibility than is now the case. I am not urging that they should keep coldly aloof from patriotic sentiment; but at any rate before the struggle has actually commenced, when the cloud of discord that is to cover the sky is as yet no bigger than a man's hand, it is surely the imperative duty of all moral persons, according to their gifts and leisure, to make an earnest and systematic attempt to form an impartial view of the points at issue.

There are three stages in such an attempt, which

are not always distinguished. First, we may endeavour to put ourselves in the opponent's place, carrying with us our own principles and views of right, and see whether, when we look at the opponent's case from the inside, there is not more to be said for it than appeared when we contemplated it from the outside. Secondly, if we have no doubt that our opponent is in the wrong, according to principles of right that we sincerely hold, we still have to ask ourselves whether we apply these principles not merely in claiming our rights, but also in practically determining the performance of our duties. For if there has been divergence between our actions and our principles, though it may not always be a reason for abandoning a present claim—for two wrongs do not make a right—it is an argument for mildness and for a spirit of compromise. And, thirdly, if there seems to us to be a real difference of principles, then comes the most difficult duty of endeavouring to place ourselves in an impartial position for contemplating the different sets of principles, and seeing if there is not an element of truth in the opponent's view which we have hitherto missed. It is hard to bring a man to this when once the complex collision of principles and interests has begun, and it is still harder to bring a nation to it; but it is a plain

duty imposed on us by reason, and it is the most essential part of the internal method of aiding the transition from strife to concord, without which the perfecting of the machinery of arbitration does not seem to me likely to achieve very great results. Fortunately it is not, for practical needs, indispensable that the opposing views of justice should be completely harmonized; it is practically sufficient if the divergence be so far reduced by reciprocal admissions that the difference remaining may appear to both less important than the evils of war. Thus the effort at mutual comprehension, even if it does not lead to anything like agreement, may still avert strife. For, finally, one great argument for the strenuous use and advocacy of what I may distinguish as the spiritual method of avoiding the appeal to brute force in international disputes—the cultivation of a spirit of justice—is that it tends to promote the application of the external or political method. If we school ourselves to seek no more than is our due in any dispute, and to take pains to ascertain what this is, we shall be practically more willing to submit our claims to arbitration; and, further, if a keen interest in international justice spreads through civilized nations, confidence in arbitrators will tend to increase.

I pass to consider briefly the burning question

of the strife between industrial classes, that is an increasingly prominent feature of modern civilized society; the strife which, so far as physical violence is excluded by political order, is carried on between two groups of producers—ordinarily manual labourers and employers—by means of concerted refusals to exchange productive services except on terms fixed by one or other of the opposing groups. There is no kind of strife to which the application of the method of arbitration appears at first sight more reasonable, or is more commonly demanded; but there is none in which the nature of the case ordinarily presents greater obstacles to the satisfactory application of it. The difficulty here is not so much to find an arbitrator adequately free from bias as to find principles of distributive justice which the common sense of both the classes concerned accepts. This is a difficulty that seems to reach its maximum in the present state of society, which is distracted between two opposing ideals. According to the individualistic ideal, monopoly and combination would only exist to an insignificant extent, and every individual worker would obtain, through unlimited competition, the market value—representing the social utility—of the services rendered by him to society. On the other hand, so far as we can conceive a completely socialistic

*régime* to exist at all, we must suppose that the remuneration allowed to different classes of producers—beyond the minimum which anyone could obtain from the state in return for the work which it would have to provide for him somehow—would be determined by some administrative organ of government, on principles laid down by the legislature. In neither case would there be an opening for the industrial strife that naturally occurs in our present intermediate system, in which the pursuit of self-interest is more and more prompting to combined instead of simply competitive action. In this system the problem of determining the just or equitable division of any product, between two or more groups of the persons who have produced it, only admits of a rough and, to a great extent, arbitrary solution. Compulsory arbitration in the disputes thus arising would involve serious risks in a fully-peopled state; for the rules to be applied by the arbitrator would in the last resort have to be determined by government; and a state that undertook to fix the terms of industrial bargains would be responsible for any want of employment that might result, and would therefore be in a logically weak position for refusing to provide employment on the terms thus laid down; while if it attempted any such provision, full-blown Socialism would be well

in sight. And even voluntary arbitration is, under these conditions, only applicable when the two parties have been somehow brought to agreement as to the general rules by which any particular dispute should be decided; and the difficult problem is how to bring them to this agreement. Here again, therefore, the external method of composing strife requires the aid of the spiritual method. For the reason I have explained, to appeal to the sense of justice, strictly speaking, of the opposing parties would be rather ineffective rhetoric. But we may none the less endeavour to develop the elements from which the moral habit of justice springs—on the one hand, sympathy, and the readiness to imagine oneself in another's place and look at things from his point of view; and on the other hand, the intelligent apprehension of common interests. In this way we may hope to produce a disposition to compromise, adequate for practical needs, even when the adjustment thus attained can only be rough, and far removed from what either party regards as ideally equitable.

My limits do not allow me to discuss the larger questions raised by the other external method of realizing justice between classes in a state—I mean the construction of a supreme government that will, in legislation and taxation and the control of adminis-



tration, keep a just balance between different sections of the community. I can only express my conviction that the most skilfully-adjusted representative system will not really protect us against a majority, formed by a combination of selfish interests, becoming practically judge in its own cause; and the belief in the natural right of the majority of any community to do what it likes is a political superstition which is rapidly passing to the limbo of such superstitions. The only sure way of preventing strife within modern states from growing continually more bitter and dangerous lies in persuading the citizens, of all classes and sections, that it is not enough to desire justice sincerely; it is needful that they fit themselves, by laborious and sustained efforts to understand the truths mingled with opposing errors, for the high and deeply responsible function, which democracy throws on them, of determining and realizing social justice so far as it depends on government. Otherwise, there seems grave reason to fear that the strife of sections within a community may lead to war in the future, as it has done in the past.

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